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ABSTRACT

Results from a study of minority participation and perspectives on two efforts at school reform are reported. Two case studies of different approaches to school district restructuring in urban schools were conducted in Chicago (Illinois) and Milwaukee (Wisconsin) in schools with predominantly Mexican-American populations in the 1989-90 school year. During the study period, the enrollment of Chicago Public Schools was 425,000 students, and that of Milwaukee Public Schools was 90,000 students. Data were collected from the following sources: (1) interviews and observations at both sites; (2) minutes of meetings of school councils, teacher groups, citywide coalitions, and training groups; (3) legislation and press reports; and (4) a teacher survey. The ethnicity of those involved was examined as an aspect of reform efforts. The one common theme in both districts that emerged from all actors in the reform effort was that restructuring efforts should, or could, help students by shifting attention and power closer to the school community. In urban schools where "minorities" are the majority of the population, it would be reasonable to expect that if the local governance councils reflect the schools' student population, the councils' actions would more closely relate to student needs. Ethnicity surfaced as a factor in the following aspects of reform: (1) degree and type of decentralization; (2) role and power of the principal; (3) differences in the backgrounds of teachers and local school councils; and (4) the gap between those involved at the school level and outside the school. A 26-item list of references is included. (SLD)

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The Connection Between Urban School Reform and Urban Student Populations: Ethnic Composition of Actors in Two Case Studies of School Reform

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This article reports on a selected set of results from a study which explored minority participation and perspective in two efforts at school reform. Two case studies of schools involved in different approaches to school district restructuring, one in Chicago and one in Milwaukee, were conducted over a period of six months in the 1989-90 school year. Data was collected through onsite interviews and observations at both school sites; from minutes of meetings of local school councils, teacher groups, citywide coalitions, and training sessions; from legislation and press reports; and from a teacher survey. This article looks at the ethnicity of actors involved at all levels of implementing these two efforts at reform and suggests implications for further study of the relationship of ethnicity to the following aspects of reform: first, the degree and type of decentralization and local school governance structure; second, the role and power of the school principal; third, differences between the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of teaching staff and local school councils; and fourth, the gap between those involved in reform at the school level and those outside the school. Ethnicity surfaced as a factor in these aspects of reform. Student populations in both case study schools were predominantly Mexican-American. In data analysis implementation of restructuring was viewed, not as a single event, but as a chain of interacting people and events, each with a connected part to play. Analyses and comparisons were made within each layer of the chain for each school and between layers.

Currently, public education is beset with demands for change. The public is greatly concerned about lack of achievement and decline in the

educational level of students leaving public schools. This dissatisfaction has particularly focused on urban schools and has resulted in an onslaught of educational innovations designed to improve the quality of education in our cities' schools.

Statistics show that student populations in urban schools are predominantly poor and "minority." The term minority is misleading in the discussion of large urban school districts because what has been termed minority for the population at large is actually the majority in most urban school system systems. Nevertheless, this paper uses that term to describe the populations usually identified by that term in educational literature, primarily African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans. It is unquestionably minority students who are at the bottom of the heap in urban student achievement and dropout rates (Schorr, 1989; Steinberg, 1984; National Center for Education Statistics Analysis Report, 1989). How do the reform efforts floating around urban school systems specifically connect to these students and their communities? Are the ethnic and racial minorities involved in defining what schools need in terms of reform? Are they involved in initiating current reforms? Are they involved in implementing or monitoring what is happening in schools in terms of change and reform? Poor and minority students are the biggest casualties of the urban public school systems as they exist. How are the current efforts at reform addressing that? The sheer numbers of minority students in urban schools makes it imperative to take a hard look at how the swirl of reform efforts directly impacts these student populations.

For the most part school reform literature has danced around defining who is under discussion when there is talk about urban school reform (Oakes, 1986). It is important for social, economic, and political reasons as well as moral reasons to clarify just how these great numbers of students are being impacted by the various efforts at reform (Lefkowitz, 1985); Rothman, 1990; Rothman and Wilson, 1990). It seems ludicrous to initiate studies on urban school reform by acknowledging that the student population in an urban school system is predominantly minority and then proceed to study reform without ever directly and specifically addressing how reform efforts connect with that most important fact - who the students are. Much has been written about the nature and problems of urban school systems and their students and much written about school reform but the connection between the schools' populations, their needs and wants, to the reform efforts still remains unclear.

Although there is research on needs of minority students, this research and subsequent literature is often ignored and not utilized by school districts and change experts in their formulation of theory and policy related to school reform in urban school districts (Boyer, 1984; Griego-Jones, 1990; Medina, 1990; Schorr, 1990; Wilson and Fergus, 1990). The thinking that is propelling school reform is still being done by White middle class educators whose mental images are filled with White middle class students, not racial and ethnic minority students (Oakes, 1986).

In reviewing the change literature, the need to study just how change efforts directly address the school populations becomes apparent (Bacharach, 1990; Marcoulides & Heck, 1990). The author's own previous

research conducted in three large, urban school systems sin which personnel described change in their districts and described their own roles in the implementation of change also suggested this need. A striking finding in that previous study was that all three school districts had significant minority student populations, ranging from fifty to eighty-seven percent, and yet only two of the many examples of change described by school district personnel were directly connected to those minority students. Those two examples of change that addressed the minority student populations were busing for integration and implementation of a bilingual program. Other examples of change, such as site based management, new curriculum, and district reorganization were not described in relation to the minority student populations. This observation suggested that the current efforts at changing urban education may not be matching the reality of the urban school. How do the reform efforts try to match the needs of any given student population in each school, minority or otherwise? Given the diversity that exists in urban school systems, it is unlikely that a blanket reform approach will connect with the variety of populations represented within urban school systems. These observations led to the initiation of the study reported here. Funding and support for the study was provided by the University of Wisconsin System Institute on Race and Ethnicity.

Methods and procedures

The researcher conducted case studies in two large, urban school districts. Each district had chosen to "restructure" itself although each

had a different approach to that concept. Restructuring of school districts is currently a popular movement (although it is defined in various ways) which shows some promise of radically changing the delivery of education in school systems (David, 1989; O'Neil, 1990; Timar, 1989).

The two case study schools were involved in different types of restructuring efforts in two Midwest urban school systems, one in Milwaukee and one in Chicago. The reason for studying schools in two different districts was to vary the degree of decentralization and allocation of power within districts. Milwaukee has subdivided the district into six regional subdistricts and made those the points of "service delivery," while Chicago has focused more on an individual school based governance model.

The primary source of data was on-site interviews with those involved in various aspects of reform - school personnel, parents and community, central and sub-district administrators, and university, government, and business leaders. Data was also collected through on-site observations in schools and meetings of various groups (teachers, local school councils, citywide coalitions of business, university, and city leaders) as well as analysis of minutes from those meetings. The goal was to get perspectives from those involved in all aspects or "layers" of the restructuring effort, from those in the classroom to those involved in drafting and implementing the reform plans on a broader scale.

Change and reform are long term propositions, but case studies begin to give insist to aspects that could help clarify and measure how restructuring involves or doesn't involve minority populations and how it

can change education for minority students. This article reports on one very basic aspect, that of the ethnic composition and ethnic distribution within each layer of these two restructuring efforts.

Settings

Criteria for selection of school sites were that they be reflective of the urban school populations in this country as a whole, that is, schools with significant numbers of poor and ethnic and racial minority students. According to many studies, the Hispanic student population in urban systems is the most negatively affected by the present system (Lefkowitz, 1985; Medina, 1990; Orum, 1986). This is indicated by Hispanics having the highest dropout rates, lowest achievement scores, and experiencing the greatest degree of segregation (National Center for Education Statistics Analysis Report, 1989; Orum, 1986). Some authors claim that the Hispanic population has also been the most ignored in the research on school change and reform (Arias, 1986; Medina, 1990; Orfield, 1986). Consequently, the two schools chosen for this study are in predominantly Hispanic (Mexican American) neighborhoods and have high percentages of Hispanic students. The analysis of data reported here focuses on looking at Hispanic participation and distribution within layers, from the school site (principal and teachers), to parents, neighborhood community, to city and state business and political leaders.

Because of the high incidence of poverty as a characteristic of urban student populations, the two schools had a significant percentage of low income students. And finally, the schools had to be designated by the districts as site based management schools emphasizing parent and community

involvement within their respective restructuring designs. Below are a brief overviews of each school district to give a picture of the settings in which data was collected during the 1989-90 school year.

Chicago. The reform literature is full of descriptions of the unprecedented reform experiment in Chicago. This study does not attempt to review the history and scope of this district wide effort at restructuring. Suffice to say that state legislation effective July 1, 1989 mandated sweeping changes in governance of the schools. Highlights of the legislation are the transfer of authority from central administration to Local School Councils by giving Councils authority to hire principals, to approve the school's budget, and to influence and approve the School Improvement Plan. State legislation divides the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) with an enrollment of 425,000 students, into eleven subdistrict areas, (including one high school area which encompasses all high schools), with an office and district superintendent for each area.

Unquestionably, the point of the Chicago reform legislation and movement was to break up the very strong bureaucratic central administration and make the school the locus of control. Each school now has a Local School Council (LSC) composed of elected members (two teachers, two community representatives, six parents) and the principal. There is also a subdistrict Council made up of representatives from each LSC in the subdistrict area. Members of the city-wide Central School Board have always been and still are appointed by the Mayor. Consequently, the school system has historically been very tied to city government.

The climate and publicity surrounding the Chicago educational reform effort are unprecedented. There is a sense within the broader education community (university, city, state, business) that this was a "last change" attempt to save the school system. There is a fervor among proponents of the reform akin to that of the Civil Rights movement of the sixties. The community at large is very aware of the plight of the CPS and the radical effort to restructure the schools, particularly in regard to the Local School Council and its authority to hire principals. The press has publicized this aspect of the reform, especially in cases where council decisions have resulted in conflict. The term "reform" is thrown about everywhere and the assumption seems to be that the schools and classrooms themselves are going through some type of reform.

Milwaukee. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) has an enrollment of 90,000 students. It has a history of being progressive and innovative in educational change and reform. For example, in the early eighties it received publicity for its RISE program and urban/suburban integration plan. After having the same superintendent for fourteen years, a new African American superintendent was brought in two years ago. Full of reform ideas, in his second year he subdivided the district into six service delivery areas with a community superintendent, an Instructional Support Team (IST), and a district office for each area. Each area also has a Community Advisory Council composed of members nominated by the community at large in each district and appointed by the Community superintendent. District guidelines give the Community superintendent responsibility to insure ethnic balance. Most schools have some type of

local parent advisory council but only certain MPS schools have been designated as Site Based Management Schools. These schools, which were in operation prior to last year's district reorganization receive extra monies and support to develop and maintain their site based councils.

This past school year, 1989-90, there was widespread confusion and lack of understanding throughout the district about the role and authority of the various layers of the reorganized district administration. To some outside observers there was a climate of struggle and unrest between the "old" central office and the new community superintendents and staff as they adjusted to the restructuring and tried to define roles in the new system.

The Milwaukee school was chosen for the study because of its demographics, its designation as a Site Based Management school and because it was just beginning to implement a new K-3 ungraded primary structure in the 1989-90 school year. Unlike Chicago, Milwaukee does not have all of its schools involved in one major reform effort. Rather, there is a great variety of reform initiatives within the system. Individual schools have some freedom to try various innovations, or to develop their own. In some cases, faculties vote to implement District initiatives that seem to hold promise for change. In the case of the ungraded primary concept, according to respondents, some members of the School Board and district administration had decided that the concept was worth trying and essentially sent out a call for proposals to schools which might be interested in reorganizing themselves in an ungraded way. Eventually one school in each of the six subdistricts was chosen from among those

interested. In one subdistrict, however, no school submitted a proposal and so the area superintendent chose one building and strongly encouraged the staff to involve themselves in this effort. The principal and faculty were willing to try but it was not their initiative. This is the school in the study.

The 1989-90 school year was a planning year for those involved in the implementation of the ungraded primary at the six pilot schools. There is a central office administrator who is overseeing and coordinating the six schools involved in implementing the pilot ungraded primary project. Meetings between the central office coordinator and school staffs started well into the 1989-90 school year and activity has centered on planning and coordinating efforts for the 1990-91 school year. The school building itself has not yet experienced the brunt of the activity except for the principal and four teachers on the school's planning committee.

Findings

Across the board, the one common theme which emerged in both districts and from all actors was the perception that the restructuring efforts should, or could, help students in their schools through the focus on local school control, by shifting attention and power closer to the school community. In those urban schools where "minorities" are the majority of the population, it would be reasonable to expect that if the local governance councils reflected the school's student population, the actions of the councils would more closely relate to student needs. How can we know if this focus actually does connect the student population more

directly to schooling by enhancing minority participation in governance of schools and the delivery of education to urban students?

At a very basic level, a look at the ethnic identity of the actors involved in the various aspects and at all layers of the reforms, - the school, local community, district, and city - gives a gross measure of minority, in these two cases Hispanic, participation. It also gives some indication of the representativeness of actors in these school reform efforts to the student population at the case study buildings. Further analysis of interactions and decision making at the local council level, and at every other level, would yield information about just how this involvement and representativeness affect power and influence. This article begins the process by looking at the ethnic composition and ethnic distribution of actors at every level involved in the reform efforts and, considering data from interviews, offers suggestions for further study.

Chicago. At the Local School Council level where the power now theoretically lies in Chicago, all eleven members of the case study Council were Hispanics except for one, a teacher. The principal, a very important actor, was Hispanic. The Hispanic member of the LSC were a mixture of professional and working class parents and community members. A few had experience working on committees but clearly the principal and teachers were more adept at handling parliamentary procedure, articulating their points of view, and manipulating discussion. In this sense they exerted more influence, but all members were very comfortable speaking up, asking questions, and making themselves heard. The majority of the group supported the principal and looked to him for guidance and support. There

was a clear split between factions on the committee, with the smaller faction strongly against the principal (this faction included the non-Hispanic teacher). At times the discussions turned spiteful and sarcastic but several members reprimanded others on their rudeness and high-handed manner.

In contrast, the teaching staff at the school was predominantly non-Hispanic White which is reflective of national statistics on teaching staff. Those who were Hispanic were all part of the bilingual program cadre of teachers. There were no Hispanic representatives on the teachers' Professional Personnel Advisory Committee.

At the next level of the school system and of reform, the subdistrict and district central office, the subdistrict superintendent was Hispanic as were some central office personnel who served as resources to the school. For example, coordinators from the bilingual office were Hispanic.

Another very important collective actor in the reform chain for this particular school, the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) is a well known and well established Hispanic community advocacy group in Chicago. It had been very influential in negotiations for school reform at the city and state level and was very adept at organizing parents and community to action. It has also been one of the main resources for training LSC members during the first year of implementation. UNO, because of its involvement both with LSCs and the "movers and shakers" was the only bridge between those layers of reform. The school building, then, and levels closest to it were well represented by Hispanic participants except within the teachers' group.

At the level of city and state "movers and shakers" the picture changes. In the coalitions of Chicago business and government leaders who were influential in developing and lobbying for the state reform legislation there is less Hispanic presence. Attendance and participation at coalition meetings indicated that White university, business, and political leaders dominated the activity at that level. The only Hispanic representation on these coalitions were representatives from UNO and a few representatives from building LSCs. The Hispanic population in Chicago, although clearly a minority (26%), is growing and is heavily concentrated in certain areas of the city. In those areas, the school councils and subdistricts offices had strong Hispanic representation, but in the city and state at large they were a definite minority.

The role of the Central Board of Education is not the same as it was before the new legislation, but it power and function in relation to the Local School Councils is still to be determined. The interim Board formed by the legislation to oversee reform implementation was expanded to fifteen members in order to better represent the city's diverse population. The permanent Central Board members will still be appointed by the Mayor of Chicago. This appointment power has traditionally made a strong link between city government and the school system and many respondents viewed central administration as another patronage arm of city government. Another city government official, the Deputy Mayor who is in charge of education affairs for the city, is also Hispanic.

Milwaukee. At the school level the teaching staff is similar to Chicago. However, the similarity ends there. The principal was not

Hispanic. The building planning committee for the ungraded primary which meets with the central office coordinator had one Hispanic member, a primary bilingual teacher. This member was added by the principal so that bilingual classrooms would be represented. Parents and community so far were not at all involved in initiating and/or implementing this new thrust. The Site Based Management Council was not involved in the initiation or implementation of the ungraded concept at all.

At the next level, that of the subdistrict, the community superintendent, assistant community superintendent, and the IST member assigned to this school and the ungraded project were Hispanic. It was this community superintendent who chose the school in this service delivery area and "encouraged" the principal and staff to participate. The Community Advisory Council had no involvement with this project.

Those at the central office layer of reform were African American and White, with the only central office Hispanics being administrators in the bilingual program. The city's business and community leaders were predominantly White. Political ties between the school system and city government were not as close as in Chicago, but civic groups had a long tradition of support for education. School reform, however, was initiated within the school system itself with influence and pressure from the broader community. Reforms were not mandated and outlined by outside legislation as in Chicago. The School District Board of Directors did not have Hispanic members.

Discussion.

If control of schooling would indeed change and be in the hands of the school, its inhabitants, and surrounding neighborhood, then it is reasonable to assume that there might be a difference in the delivery of schooling if different actors are now making decisions. However, if decision making takes place at various levels and outcomes are results of complex interaction among all actors at all levels, then everything is not so simple.

There is a very complex interaction at a number of layers. The influence, activities, and involvement of actors within each level and ways in which levels connect with each other need to be documented and clarified. Much of the literature, both in the popular press and scholarly journals, talks about school reform as if the classroom is the only place where the change action takes place. In reality the activity in most major reform efforts is at a variety of levels. It would be more helpful to define or clarify the relationships or connections, between the city level, district level, and school aspects.

In Chicago where the thrust of the reform was absolutely toward making the Local School Council the center of governance, there were definitely more Hispanics actually participating in school and neighborhood levels of reform. This was true in all schools with student populations between thirty-three and ninety-five percent Hispanic except for neighborhoods with magnet schools (Lewis and Taylor, 1990). In Milwaukee where governance is essentially where it has always been, at the Board and central office, parents and community were not involved in implementing the

adopted innovation, even though there is a Site Based Management council. Membership on the Community Advisory Council in the case study school's Service Delivery Area was representative of the Hispanic student population, but they were not involved in initiation or implementation of reform efforts.

Degree and type of restructuring. Looking at ethnic composition in the two chains of reform and considering data from interviews produced many questions which an be categorized into four major questions. First, is a major shakeup and restructuring like that in Chicago necessary in order to include minority participation and perspectives and to give those perspectives meaning at each school? The reality of belonging to a group that is a minority city wide or state wide can preclude any real, significant, meaningful influence if all power is left at those levels. But if reform brings about a realignment, if a shifting occurs, then a minority group would have a chance at meaningful participation and control over those schools where they are the majority. They would have more influence over their own children's schooling. This focus on local governance may be the answer to coping with the cultural, ethnic, racial, and linguistic diversity that exists in the urban schools today. Reformers have always operated on the assumption that schools are more similar than different (Metz, 1990). If reformers take a hard look at the most important part of each school, the students, that is not the case.

Looking at the broader picture of reform, at the subdistrict, district, city and state levels, there would be less reason to believe that minority perspectives would be influential there as they almost become

"diluted." In both districts Hispanics held some high visible positions like area superintendencies, but those at the central office level who are implementing reform efforts and interpreting them to the local schools are not reflective of these schools' population.

In Milwaukee there had been some shake-up but the role of the new layer of subdistrict administration was still being defined. The new sub-district structure was intended to involve communities more closely by placing and delivering resources closer to them, but whether this is happening or not is still in question. There was no evidence given by respondents at the case study school that this was happening yet. The central office structure is still rather traditional in nature and still controls budgets and hiring of key staff including principals and teachers. Those involved in initiating and promoting the ungraded primary concept were not connected to the school community and parents at all.

Even in Chicago where legislation leaves no question about where power is supposed to be, connection between layers are still fuzzy. The Local School Council's power comes from state legislation and there are many interest groups who influence state legislation.

Role and ethnicity of the principal. The second question raised by a look at the ethnic composition of students and actors in reform concerns the role of the principal. As restructuring gives parents and community more real governance authority or as a community takes more control of schools, it seems that the principal may become an even more important power broker. Who the principal perceives his boss to be will determine

how he wields his power. When the parents and community had power to hire the principal in the Chicago school, his orientation shifted over the year from taking direction from central office to thinking of it as a resource, and the LSC become the group he had to impress. Implications for local school communities, in most cases minority communities, are important. The parents and their hiring power became important. In Chicago, the principal's knowledge and experience kept the majority of the council members with him. The principal and the president of the council in particular worked very closely. The principal made sure of that. He is a very capable administrator and had already proven himself to be an effective principal. In Milwaukee the principal retained a more traditional orientation. This principal looked to central office for direction although there was freedom to adjust anything to the building situation. The principal's direction was from central office with a detour at the Service Delivery Area, more for resources, however, than direction. There was not the same immediate accountability and involvement with parents regarding the ungraded primary in Milwaukee.

The principal was regarded as very important by all actors in both districts. In Chicago, parents seemed to follow the principal's lead more often than teachers as indicated by action on Council issues. Was this because of an affinity with his ethnicity or an inclination to defer to the traditional leader of a school, the principal? This inclination to defer has been well documented (Malen & Ogawa, 1988) but data from Council meetings gave cause to speculate that ethnicity also played a role. For example, does the match between the ethnicity of the principal, the LSC,

and the student population make a difference in how well local governance works for schools? Does it help to have the principal be culturally the same as the student population? In the Chicago case the fact that the principal was Hispanic, spoke Spanish, and knew the neighborhood was important to the council members. Because of his bilingual skills he was able to control the council discussions at times because he controlled the flow of information from one group to another by translating.

Ethnic identification and loyalty was an issue in Chicago. The press was full of reports of accusations resulting from incidents in hiring and firing principals because of ethnicity. The issue of ethnicity was hidden in some ways, not always openly talked about, but respondents did say "others" thought it was an issue. Some teachers seemed to be afraid that there would be a bond between the council and principal because they were of the same ethnic group, and that in some subtle way, this bond would work against them.

There really is no guarantee that Hispanic or minority actors would consider needs of the minority population more than anyone else, but membership or positions do give an indication of minority participation in the reform efforts.

Difference between student populations and teaching staff.

The third major question raised in looking at ethnic composition and distribution is whether the ethnic composition of the teaching staff needs to be addressed specifically as a part of reform efforts. The tremendous cultural and socio-economic differences between the teaching staff and

student/community populations are viewed by some as major stumbling blocks in educational systems as they exist today (Medina, 1990; Metz, 1990). In Chicago the student population was 97% Hispanic and in Milwaukee it was 45% Hispanic but their teachers were predominantly White. Coming from different worlds, they may see education and each other in different terms, even though teaching staff and parents may have the same eventual goals for students. (Moll, 1990; Wong Fillmore, 1990).

In restructuring of individual schools and districts those differences could be the downfall of urban reform efforts if nothing is done to address the differences through staff development or hiring of minority staff as a part of the reform. In theory, the closer governance gets to the local school community, the more closely it will reflect the needs and wants of the school parents and community. At the same time, however, the closer the governance gets to the local school community, the stronger and sharper the differences between the teaching staff and the local community may be.

Nothing in either restructuring effort was being done to avert a conflict or to help each group understand the values, beliefs, and desires of the other. Besides retraining of present staff, another approach would be to change the composition of the teaching staff. Districts need to vigorously pursue hiring and recruiting of more minority teachers as an integral part of reform. Even within a new population of minority teachers there would have to be intensive leadership training so that minorities are not just tokenly represented but are influential in what happens in their buildings. The differences between teaching staff and local communities in

culture, socio-economic conditions, and loyalties are very real and need to be addressed.

Gap between schools and policy makers. Finally, another finding of the study reported here was that, again, there is a "gap" between the reform theory formulators and those most directly affected by the reform efforts, the school building personnel. This gap has been documented in reform efforts for several decades (House, 1974; McLaughlin, 1978). Is this gap persisting in spite of restructuring?

In Chicago the gap surfaced in differing perceptions of actors on issues such as the content and type of training needed by LSC members. IN surveys taken of LSC councils, parents and community members felt they needed training on budgets and how to make them. University and business coalition members, however, felt that LSC members really didn't need training in how to prepare budgets because they weren't going to have to prepare them, just approve them. Those who had familiarity with budget procedure couldn't understand why parents and community members felt the need to know more about budget preparation. Parents and community representatives questioned how they could approve something they didn't understand. The experiences of each group didn't allow them to innately understand how the other group was going to react to an issue. Another example of the economic and cultural gap was in the different understandings of what t means to make policy. Parents' questions made it apparent that they really didn't understand what "policy" meant.

Is there a way to make the connections and understandings between layers a focus of reform so that the layers work in tandem? Is there

enough attention being paid to how various actions in reform understand each other, especially given the tremendous differences in ethnic, socio-economic composition of local councils and teachers and business and city leaders. There must be some way to close the gaps or at least establish a method of communication between the layers of people involved in reform.' The various groups need each other. For example, the minority school communities needed the majority movers and shakers who used power in the state legislature to enable minority groups to have Local School Councils. However, the lack of communication and innate misunderstandings could thwart a cohesive effort at reform of public schooling.

There is a need to build a base of research that defines to what extend, and in what ways, ethnic and racial minority communities of our cities' schools are involved in school improvement and reform so crucial to them and their children. IF real power is at the local level, then the fact that Hispanics are well represented on LSCs should mean something. A further analysis of the observations and minutes of the Local School Council meetings at the Chicago case study school is underway to identify areas and issues where these members' influence can be shown. In Milwaukee, as the 1990-91 school year unfolds, the same will be done with data collected from interviews with in that reform effort. The basic purpose of the entire study is to explore how we can know, conceptualize, or measure how any given reform effort connects with the specific student population in any given urban school system. Looking at the ethnic composition and ethnic distribution within layers of actors in reform efforts is just the beginning of developing this framework.

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